



Natomas Oral Histories

2015/027

Oral interview of

Joaquin Pereira

with his wife **Rose Pereira**

October 5, 1996

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This is not a verbatim transcript. Parts of the interview have been paraphrased.

Taffy: This is October 5, Saturday morning, 1996. My name is Taffy Rau and I am going to interview Joaquin and Rose Pereira about their experiences and remembrances about the Natomas area in Sacramento.

Taffy: Good morning. Hi. I wanted to get a little background information on you. I know that you were born in the Algarve in Portugal. Tell me a little bit about what your family may have done there.

[00:00:40]

Joaquin: Well, my dad came from the Algarve in the early 1900s. He came over here because he wanted more freedom. The Catholic church was making them do things they didn't want, and then taxed them. So he came to California. He had his first wife come with him later. They had children, Chris, and I don't know if it's one or two other children.

Rose: One daughter and one son.

Joaquin: One daughter and one son. He was farming in the Natomas area and in the Clarksburg area. They had a pretty big operation with partners in it. They were one of the first farmers who bought a Holt Caterpillar tractor from Stockton to use in their farming operation. It was mostly beans, alfalfa and barleys and other grains. In 1929, he was involved in an accident, apparently on a levee. He ran off, and it killed his wife and his daughter. My half-brother, Chris, was injured but he survived, and my dad was injured but he survived. In 1930, he went back to Portugal to look for a wife. He met my mother's sister and they were sort of attracted, but when he saw my mother, he exchanged the sister for my mother. They ended up getting married and I was born in Portugal. My father bought property in Portugal and also put in wells and he had a lot of money then. It was just before the Depression started. After a while using laborers to build wells and developing properties, he decided he'd come back to the United States because Portugal had a depression at that time too.

Rose: Yes.

[00:03:20]

Joaquin: Even later than when the United States had it. He came over here, left my mother there, and then I was born. He had us come over to California by way of New York, Ellis Island. It was in the wintertime. My mother said that she was very, very depressed coming into the United States because it was so cold. She had never seen snow before and she thought she was coming into the worst area. After the train got into Lake Tahoe and that area, it was still snowing, but she started seeing green trees and everything and she started feeling better. When she got to Sacramento, she was very happy because it was just like it was in Portugal. It was wintertime. She and my dad started farming in what is now called North Sacramento for the North Sacramento Land Company. They farmed beans — lima beans and pinto beans. In 1937 or 1938, we bought from the North Sacramento Land Company a dairy. Well, we bought property. We put a well in and fenced it and had dairy cows. I know I started milking cows when I was 7 or 8 years old. I hated to milk cows. So my dad put me to work running the cream separator. He

and my mother would get up and milk the cows and I would run the cream separator. I know he put into my mind that I must clean everything really good. Here I was, 7 or 8 years old, cleaning all the things with soap, you know. It was a Montgomery Ward separator. You cranked on it until it got to be so many RPMs, then you flipped the switch and the electric would run it. We were one of the first families that had electricity.

Taffy: Oh my.

[00:05:33]

Joaquin: Back in 1938, just about three miles from here, we had about 100 head of Jerseys and Guernsey cattle. We had a John Deere tractor. We had a well that we pumped the water out using the tractor with a pulley to run the pump. My dad used to make one trip a week to Crystal Creamery with a truckload of cream. Back in 1938, '39, and '40, the price of cream was so low, that I remember him saying that "Gee, for all that week's work, we only got \$38 — isn't that terrible?" I didn't really realize what money was. I remember the tax collector came over. He was a one-legged guy. He taxed us on our property. My dad said, "Gee, that's too high." It was probably around \$50 per year or something. The tax collector told my dad, "Look around all over and how many houses do you see?" My dad said, "Well, we can't see any." The tax collector said, "Well, that's why you have to pay so much taxes. Nobody else is sharing the tax base with you." I remember my dad wasn't too happy about that. But, he continued working and we fenced the field. It was in the wintertime when the ground was easy to dig. All we did was cut branches off the willow trees, stick them in the ground. By the time springtime rolled around, all our posts started growing into trees. I can remember the work that we did. It wasn't so hard to dig in the wintertime when the grounds were wet.

[00:07:29]

In those days to mow grass we had one of those mowers that operated off the wheels, it made the sickle go back and forth. When the mower wasn't going forward, the sickle wouldn't work. It was so difficult to mow in those days, your grass. I had the job of when it got plugged up, I would have to run out there and clean the sickle off so it wouldn't be plugged up. Then my dad would order the horses to go forward and sometimes it would go 100 feet or so and we would get into some kind of wiry grass and it wouldn't cut at all. My dad would get frustrated with that. After we got the hay cut, we hired two men to help my dad load the trucks. I would be the one to drive forward. My dad would tell me, "Go forward," I would put it in low gear, and drive to the next shock of hay. They would load it, and then after we had a full load, I used to drive about a half a mile to the barn. My dad and a couple of hired hands would unload the hay into the barn. I felt real proud of myself — I was only 7 years old driving a truck. A real unfortunate thing happened one time. We were loading hay. It was almost fully loaded. My dad was talking to the hired hands; they were drinking a little bit of whiskey, too. He told me to go forward, I put it in gear and went forward, and the dog that I really loved was underneath the wheel and I ran over it and killed it. I really felt bad. It was struggling to stand up, but it died. That was a really sad thing.

[00:09:26]

We were happy raising cattle, milking the cows, and feeding the pigs. My job was to take a pail of milk and slop to the pigs. One time, we bought a prize boar at the state fair and it was in there amongst all the other pigs. When I went to feed them, I guess they drank the milk so fast and he wanted more. I could see a dirty look in that boar's eyes and face — I knew it was mean. I started running away from it and it took off after me. I got to the fence — it was about four feet high. I jumped to try to get over, and he took a bite of me. He got me in the rear end. I still have a big scar. He took out about four ounces of

meat. Then it tried to bite my dad one time. We ended up butchering it or selling it, I don't know which. It was a mean boar.

Then around the first of August 1940, my dad became very ill. He didn't know what was wrong. It was affecting his head a lot, he was having headaches and pain. Come to find out he had encephalitis, which is sleeping sickness. In those days they didn't know how to cure it. He went to the hospital and lived for two weeks and he died from encephalitis. That was, I think, in August of 1940.

Taffy: You were still a young child.

[00:11:14]

Joaquin: I was 9 years old. My mom couldn't handle things — she was crying all the time. I tried milking cows, but I was inadequate to do it. So we had an auction on all our cows. I think the average of all the cows we sold came to about \$12 each. It was really a trying time. My mother didn't speak any English. I was going to school. I had to translate Portuguese to English. I was sort of head of the household, but it was just too much for me. I was responsible if any of the brothers and sisters got into trouble. I was held responsible. I didn't really have a teenage life, or a childhood life, after 8 years old.

Taffy: I don't think so.

Joaquin: After my dad died, we still owed money on the land. The North Sacramento Land Company sent letters to my mom saying that if she wanted to keep the land, she would have to continue making payments. So mom asked, "Shall we keep it or not?" I told her that we just can't handle it, so we might as well let it go back. My mom didn't make any payments and we ended up losing the ranch. We ended up moving over to Silver Eagle Road on some property that my mom bought from a friend, Emelio Carasca. I know she paid \$500 for an acre of ground. We had some old Sacramento Northern Trolley cars that my dad had bought. She moved one over to Silver Eagle Road and we ended up living in that for about two and a half years. Then my mother met another Portuguese fellow. His wife had died about the same time my dad had died. She ended up getting married to Mr. Souza. He was one of my dad's friends from way back. Mr. Souza used to work for Mr. Christophel, who owned the River View Orchard. My dad and he had been friends. My mom married him, she had three more children. She was able to support us kids a lot easier. In those days, I don't think they had welfare or anything. We had a rough time. After I was living on the farm, they called it Orchard Lane — we had peaches, nectarines, and cherries. I did farming work.

[00:14:14]

I can remember during harvest time and during planting time, my stepfather kept me home from school to do chores. I know the truant officer told him that I must go to school, that he would have to hire someone to do chores. He hated to do that because he wanted to keep the expenses down. I ended up going to Jefferson School at the time. Our teacher was Mrs. Thomas, and then Mrs. Dorothy Lowe Mack from the fourth grade on. Mrs. Mack, she just died about three months ago and she was in her nineties. She drove a car up until she died. I know Mrs. Thomas was real good friends of the Witters. Even in the seventh and eighth grade we learned a lot about the stock market and things that farm people don't even think about. Out on the farm, you just tend to think of three things, and that's working, more working, and more working. They don't teach you about the stock market or real estate deals or anything like that. I ended up going to Grant Union High School. I took college preparatory class. I graduated in the top 10 percent, I think. I went to the University of California, Davis. I was an agronomy major. At that time, it was the largest college in the United States because it had a lot of acreage. It had

mostly men that were pre-med, pre-vet, and agricultural students, very few women. Luckily, I excelled in chemistry and physics, so I did pretty good in that, but I had to drop out because I had married.

[00:16:40]

I worked for the post office at night, and went to college in the daytime. It was making me very tired and run down. I dropped out of college for a semester. Immediately, the army wanted people to go to Korea. I was drafted right away. I ended up going to Fort Ord, Alabama, and Utah. The Korean War put a slow down to my college education. After I got out of the service, I went on the GI Bill. In the meantime, all this Natomas area, they were selling land real cheap, \$90 an acre, after the Depression. They usually had a bond on it for the Natomas Company for putting the levees around here. A lot of the farmers during the war around here made good money because they could pay for their land in two years from their crops. Tomatoes was a big crop, and beans, and the price of those commodities were very good.

Rose: Yes, at that time.

Joaquin: And so that is how farmers made a lot of money and bought a lot of land. Farming was the main source of revenue for the people who lived in this area. Then, in later years, many of these farmers sold their land for a real good price and moved to the city. Some of them moved back to Portugal. Of all the families out here, we knew the Cory family, the Silva family, which we're still friends — Tony Cory, we're still friends. Tony Cory's dad was the godfather of our children. The Jack Perrys — his name was Joaquin Pereira. He's 89 or 90 years old now. He lived out here on Garden Highway for many, many years. My family used to visit his family. Their sons became farmers — there's John, Joe, Joaquin, and Marie Perry.

[00:19:03]

Taffy: They changed it from Pereira to Perry, but they're really Pereira.

Joaquin: Yes. The whole family is real hard workers. Most of the Portuguese out here worked hard, and were sort of religious, had high morals. They didn't associate too much with city people. The Portuguese felt like the rich people were not too friendly to them. They lived a simple life, a family life. The kids learned how to do what their parents did. Most of them were Catholic. The Catholic church gave catechism after school because the schools would not let them do it during school hours.

Taffy: Did they continue to speak Portuguese amongst themselves all the time?

Joaquin: Just the parents would speak to the children in Portuguese. All the children spoke English. We tried to speak English to our parents because we felt if they spoke Portuguese and didn't speak English it, made us feel like foreigners. We wanted to blend in and be an American.

Taffy: Right. What did you say, Rose?

Rose: He didn't mention that he had two sisters and a brother, original family, the first family. Then his mother remarried and had three more children.

Joaquin: My two sisters were born here and my brother Joe. My brother Joe worked for Social Security and he traveled to Baltimore, Albany, Georgia, and San Francisco. He worked any place where he could get a raise and go up the ladder of success. He's very successful and retired now from Social Security. My sister Rosie went to work for the telephone company and so did Josephine. They ended up getting

married and quit their jobs. My sister Josephine has four children, and my sister Rosie has no children. By being out on the farm, it seems like most of the kids out here did very well in school because they could see a desire to learn and get ahead. Just about everybody who went to Jefferson School did real good in high school. Many of them went on to college and became school teachers, successful farmers, and government employees.

[00:22:13]

Taffy: You said your father had farmed in the area and around Clarksburg before coming back directly to here. Did the Portuguese come over together, know each other, send back for — something like that? Was it a conscious “everybody come together”?

Joaquin: In Portugal, I can tell what their feeling was, to get rich. They wanted more freedom mostly. They said that this was like the land of gold. If you worked, you got paid for it. Over there, they had a dictatorship. You worked real hard and you just barely got enough food to eat. Then the Catholic church was real strong over there. Here, they still belonged to the Catholic church, but it didn’t tax them so much and didn’t interfere with them being successful. You know, religious freedom is a very important thing. My brother said he looked up the history of our family. A long time ago, there was Jewish in our system and we had to change from that because if you believed in the Jewish religion, you were condemned. So our name was probably even different. The Romans took over Portugal, then the Moors. We’ve been conquered many times. So we want to be on the right side, I guess.

Taffy: It’s a lot easier to survive that way.

Joaquin: Rose and I, we went through the Roman ruins, didn’t we.

Rose: Yes, and the Celtic ruins. It’s beautiful. There are Celtic ruins in Portugal, also.

[00:24:25]

Joaquin: The United States was a new country that was full of opportunities, that’s why a lot of people in Portugal wanted to come over here. I mean, they were not afraid of hard work or low pay, but they hated to be told what to do by someone with a lot of power, like the church or the government. There has been many cases where the Portuguese have done things that are not the greatest. One of them is, in Portugal, you can make whiskey right in your homes sometime and wine. Over here they really frowned upon Portuguese making wine and making whiskey, especially if they sold it. It was worse than selling narcotics. The attorneys would get rich off it. I know my stepdad got caught one time making whiskey and it cost a whole lot of money to get out of that. He didn’t want to do to that anymore.

Taffy: He wanted to stay out of trouble.

Joaquin: When you’re in this country, you have to live like the people who live here. They have laws that are sometimes different than the laws in Portugal, but you have to abide by the laws here. I’m very grateful. My stepdad didn’t want me to go to college, because, he said, “You already know how to farm.” My mom encouraged me to go to college. I went to the University of California, Davis, for three years, I served in the army for two years, and ended up going to Sacramento State College, and graduated from Long Beach State College. Most of the children from these farming people here end up moving to the city. They get tired of working on the farm and making very little money. I farmed for a couple years with a partner, Christophel. We had tomatoes. It was just too much work for the amount of money we made. We were spoiled already because we had gone to college. Of all the people out here,

I've known a lot of old-timers, people that ran hay, who baled hay for the farmers. Right here on this road, there was an old man that I knew, his name was Joe Lewis. He died many years ago. He said he worked so hard all those years and now he had a bad heart and was going to die, and he did. Then there was the Azevedos and the Machados, the Silvas, the Corys — Correa is their name — a man by the name of Mora, who farmed for the North Sacramento Land Company. There's Frank Freitas, who was a very successful farmer who made a lot of money. And the Costas, his dad made all the kids work real hard and they all did real well.

[00:27:02]

Taffy: Lots of Portuguese families.

Joaquin: Yes. I'd say that three-fourths of the farmers were Portuguese. Then the people who owned this, Inderkums, he married a Portuguese girl. They were the dairy people. They had a big dairy over on Garden Highway. They found out it was more profitable to have a little restaurant than it is to have a great big dairy with a whole bunch of cows.

Rose: They were hard workers.

Joaquin: Yes, they were hard workers.

Rose: Mary was born in Portugal. You probably know Mary, the owner. Didn't you say during WWII a lot of Portuguese helped when they took the Japanese to the camps? The Portuguese took over and helped keep a lot of those farms going until they came back.

Taffy: Yes, let's talk about that.

[00:28:55]

Joaquin: Yes, a lot of the Portuguese assisted the Japanese because for a while the Portuguese didn't know whether we would be encamped also during WWII because Portugal wouldn't declare war on Germany. They didn't want to take sides. We were all afraid that we might get our property taken away from us. But the Japanese went to the internment camps, and the Portuguese said, "I'll pay the taxes and farm your land until you get back." That's what happened to a lot of Japanese farmers. They were helped by the Portuguese farming their land. It didn't all come free, because they got the use of the land.

Taffy: What a wonderful contribution.

Rose: At least they didn't lose their land. They were able to come back to something.

Joaquin: It wasn't all that way, because this one Japanese farmer in Rio Linda was very bitter because when he came back, he had lost all his land.

Rose: It wasn't true of all of them, but I do think with several of them, they were helped in that way.

Taffy: How did that come about? Was it just one person's offer and starting it, and other people liked the idea?

Joaquin: No, we were very sympathetic to the Japanese citizens. Some of them had been born here. Others migrated from Japan, and we were sympathetic to them, for losing their land. It made us feel insecure. Many things happened during the war. We were afraid. They could declare the Portuguese the same as the Japanese. We were really afraid of that, the government taking over our land and putting us out in a camp or something like that.

Taffy: That would be terrible.

[00:31:04]

Joaquin: Yes. Most of the Portuguese stick together. In order to survive on a farm community, we realized that the big canning companies and the buyers were organized. The Portuguese were always fighting amongst each other. One would cut a better deal and sell it for less price to the canneries. So, some of the Portuguese started talking with one another saying that we shouldn't cut each other's throat. So we were a little better economically off than if you didn't communicate. So it was very, very important that the Portuguese would communicate and wouldn't just be working. You can work and sell your products for nothing and be real poor all the time. Those that communicated and found out what was happening around them were more successful.

Rose: I think a lot of the Portuguese today keep a lot of the traditions going through the Portuguese festivals that they have, but that is not in Portugal itself, that's from the Azores. They don't have that.

Joaquin: We have a lot of benevolent societies. Every year there's a Portuguese Holy Ghost Festival. I know my dad used to contribute to it by donating a heifer, cow, or a bull, or something, every year so they could butcher it and have meat for the festival. They used to have people from the organizers of these festivals go out to the farms to pick up what they could. What they were not able to butcher to use for that year's festival they would auction off and use the money for next year's festival. That kept the Portuguese in touch with each other. It's a very important thing to communicate — if you're in a world of your own, everything turns against you.

Taffy: That's true.

Joaquin: The Portuguese are good at socializing. Really, that is one of the traditions that they have found out is really good for your health and well-being, to socialize and have get-togethers.

Taffy: It is a good way to have the cultural community get together because things change. If you were born in Portugal but have few memories of it, that's a good way to keep it alive for you.

Rose: The young people still have that tradition today.

Taffy: Yes. What I was wondering about, in the early farming community here, were there big farmers markets, where people from Sacramento would come to shop?

[00:34:10]

Joaquin: My folks sold cherries and peaches. We had what they called the Lisbon Fruit Ranch. It was located on Orchard Lane right down from Swallows Nest Farm, and RiverView. We would sell peaches for \$2 a box. We'd sell tomatoes, cherries, nectarines. We had it open all the time. We had a sign out: Lisbon Fruit Ranch. Later on it was getting too difficult to be there all the time for people to buy. We sold our cherries through a place in Nimbus, California. We'd pick the cherries and bring them by

truck over there. They would process them and make maraschino cherries. That way we got all our money at one time. When we would have the people pick cherries, they would spend a whole day out there. Of course, they could eat all they wanted, and they liked that, but they would buy only a few dollars' worth and spend all day there. I know my stepfather would get very unhappy when they would be pulling on the limbs and break the limbs down from the trees. So it became better to sell them to the canneries. I can remember me picking cherries. I could really pick them fast. We picked them with stems when they go to the cannery. One time I picked 800 pounds in one day. I thought that was really something.

Rose: Did they have a lot of people get together with their products and produce to sell like they have today?

[00:36:11]

Joaquin: I don't remember that. Each farmer would sell their products in their own place, like the Perrys. We didn't go to farmers markets in those days. We used to go with our produce to restaurants, like with our tomatoes. They didn't pay us, but they would give us day-old bread and things they didn't sell. The day-old bread was real good yet, French bread and such. We used to mostly exchange. They liked to get the tomatoes because they would use them in their restaurants. I don't remember any farmers markets in those days, but I was so busy working. That wasn't what we did.

Taffy: Were water rights important? Were there any struggles that way?

Joaquin: Our farm was next to a canal, and we used to pump all the water we needed. In the 1950s, they started charging us so much a year for pumping out of the canal. Many of the farmers were unhappy about getting charged so much an acre for watering, but it was still a very reasonable price. We had our own pump. The Natomas Company had District 1000 Reclamation District, which provided the canals and pumped the canals in the wintertime into the Sacramento River so we wouldn't flood out. That Reclamation District 1000 is still in existence, but now it's getting to be where they're putting more and more money into flood control and the farmers are really going to be hurting. See, most of the Natomas area is close to the Capitol, and if they leave it always staying agricultural, it's very hard to be profitable because of the assessments and the taxes. Farmers don't make very much on their produce anyway.

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2.

Taffy: We were just talking about the waters and the canals and the levees and so forth. Wasn't there a ferry from this side to Woodland?

Joaquin: Yes. There was a ferry called the Elkhorn Ferry. Back in 1943, my stepfather leased some land in Woodland and we had to cross over on that ferry every day.

Taffy: Every day!

[00:00:28]

Joaquin: Yes. We hated to wait. Sometimes he'd take a half an hour to come back around. Maybe he took his lunch break or something. It was very slow getting over there. He could only take about six cars or so at a time.

Taffy: There wasn't any other way was there?

Joaquin: No not unless you wanted to go all the way into Sacramento and take the Jibboom Street Bridge and go into West Sacramento and take the River Road. It was a long ways. It would take up to an hour or two extra that way. The Elkhorn Ferry was in operation until about 1965 or so. We used to take that all the time. Getting around here was very difficult because in the wintertime the roads were so muddy, and they flooded. Going to school, where San Juan Road is, it used to flood a mile this side of the school. It was all flooded, but it was only flooded about a foot deep. When it rained real hard, there was a lot of flooding. You could hardly drive home — you'd get stuck in the mud. We had a long driveway. Gee, I don't know if I should tell you this, but the oil company used to sell us old crankcase oil to put on our driveway, so we wouldn't have dust. We would get gravel and put it on there. Actually, it made it sort of any oily, gravelly surface. It would withstand the conditions of the winter here. Nowadays, if you did that, you'd be in jail for contaminating the earth.

[00:02:36]

A lot of the farmers didn't make enough farming, so they'd have outside jobs. Some farmers would work on the hay balers. Some of them worked for Southern Pacific Depot, for the Southern Pacific. This was a good job. Since most of the people had a lot of desire to get ahead in life, they worked there and then worked their farms after work, and they were able to succeed. Farming was rough then. If you weren't efficient, you would be broke, you wouldn't be in it very long. A lot of the kids worked on the farm during grammar school. So they wouldn't graduate from grammar school until they were 16 or 17 years old. When they did that to me and the truant officer told them to send me to school, I'm glad they did, or else I would still have been farming, I think.

Taffy: That's right. We talked a little bit about the trouble that the farmers are having now with the water and other laws that have impinged and so forth. What about you?

Joaquin: In the olden days, we used to put DDT on the tomatoes, and sometimes it would make us sick. There was no environmental laws at all. If a truckload of fertilizer fell into a ditch, they wouldn't have to clean it up. I can see where the DDT that they used to use in the rice fields would kill the birds. Although the pheasants would survive anything. The pheasants would eat our tomatoes that had been sprayed with DDT and they didn't die.

Taffy: They had built up an immunity.

[00:04:48]

Joaquin: Yes. In the old days, they used to really use a lot of insecticides that could be harmful to the environment, but I think they have gone too far the other way. Now you can't even have DDT, even in an old garage. They'll slap a fine on you. Gee, its gone the other way, real strict. About endangered species, I think the environmental people have gone a little too far in the other way. Of all the studies I've made, the only way to combat the endangered species is to propagate them. Instead of making laws where it's against the law to have the spotted owl, we should let everyone raise spotted owls. There would be so many spotted owls you wouldn't have to worry about it.

Taffy: They'd make a comeback.

Joaquin: Now it's against the law to get a feather off a spotted owl or an eagle or anything. If you raise spotted owls or bald eagles and you propagated them, then they wouldn't be endangered. I don't see how these environmentalists can keep you from letting them propagate them things. There shouldn't be any endangered species. I know they have hurt the farmers a lot and the developers a lot. If the people could find if they are a useful animal they should propagate them. I know we have measles that are almost endangered now, and all other germs that are harmful to us — we want them to become an endangered species.

Taffy: That's right. Some worse than others. Ms. Pereira, would you like to talk a little bit about your memories of this area?

[00:06:46]

Rose: Well, I'm from back east. I have been here since 1949. Actually, I didn't know much of anything about this area until I married Joaquin. I didn't know any Portuguese, didn't know they existed. We don't allow them in Maine. *[laughter]* That's true. I don't know one. You look in the phone book and there are no Portuguese names.

Joaquin: You know all of this area right in here was all farming ground. There was only about five buildings within about two square miles.

Rose: I don't know, because like I say, I never came out here much. Since I've been married to Joaquin we go to a lot of the Portuguese things. I really enjoy the Portuguese people. I really liked Portugal. They are so kind and generous. I've enjoyed it. I'm kind of proud to be married to a Portuguese.

Taffy: That's great!

Joaquin: There is a saying "ignorance is bliss." The farmers worked hard. They didn't keep track of all the things that were happening to them. After all these environmental things came into effect, they were already cooked. Hey, the goose was cooked when that happened. Sometimes ignorance is bliss. If you don't know what the politicians are doing to you, it doesn't hurt until it affects you right away. I took a lot of courses in political philosophy and I know that the Portuguese were getting very angry. Especially when they realized they had been manipulated and lied to and taken advantage of. It makes them very angry. They just get frustrated and work all the harder.

Taffy: Yes.

[00:08:53]

Joaquin: In this world of ours, nowadays, there are just too many manipulations and too many treaties broken. People who promise you some things and then take it away from you. Portuguese like to be independent as much as they can be. They want to be responsible for what they do. They want to take on responsibilities. I'd say 95% of the farmers in this area have not taken in government subsidies. They want to be independent. They pay their taxes, but they don't want to take government subsidies. They don't want interference from the government, especially from people who don't know anything about the area, people not as experienced with farming. They feel they are getting back to the experience they had in Portugal with too much interference from the government, the church, and from other outside sources that are less capable than they are. That's what causes people to feel frustrated and revolt when things get real bad and they feel taken advantage of. I can see where some people have been disillusioned, but on the other side, this is where the opportunities were, settling this Natomas area.

Taffy: How are they surviving now with all the new developments in the area?

Joaquin: The parents have all died practically, and now it's their children. A lot of them didn't go through all the hardships their forefathers had gone through. They are just happy with selling the property and having money. Isn't that what you think, Rose?

Rose: I think so. I think it's true of any, whether you're Portuguese or not. This is come about because previously in farming they didn't have to go to college. Then, all of a sudden, you need a college education to run a big farm. I think that's true whether you're Portuguese or not. I don't think they've been picked on any more than any other. It's just a sign of the times, is what it is. We don't like it maybe, but you go along with it. What can you do?

[00:11:37]

Joaquin: A lot of Portuguese have been discriminated against and haven't had the rights they feel they should have had. But instead of complaining about it, they just worked a little harder and tried to overcome it. They tried to prove themselves. Some people of other nationalities and races would probably do a lot of complaining. Portuguese in the long run do not complain. They grin and bear it, and take on responsibilities. They try to forget what they were discriminated on and forge ahead. Nowadays, lots of people want the government to do everything for them. I don't think the majority of Portuguese would want that. They would rather be responsible for what they do, and do it, and not have the government tell them what to do. They want freedom mostly.

Taffy: Do you think all the development is actually hurting the area or do you think it's an improvement?

[00:13:04]

Joaquin: I'm pro-developer myself, but I know one thing that really hurts me is that some really beautiful farmland that was productive is going out of production. What really is aggravating, in my opinion, is that they are building all these houses in the flood zone. Why don't they build houses up in the mountains where it won't get flooded? But, I realize that creating problems is the only way to find opportunities. Every problem that you create has an opportunity looking at it. For instance, I became a highway patrolman because I was lazy and didn't want to work on the farm. They told us for every policeman that you have working, there's 40 jobs that you have created. You've created jobs for bail bondsman, courts, attorneys, all kinds of jobs have been created. Hiring one person to do possibly a negative thing that wasn't very popular, but somebody has to do law enforcement. I was in law enforcement. I always tried to put myself in the other persons shoes. I've done things that I wasn't proud of, but they had to be done. Like some Portuguese guy that is drunk all the time and driving down the road, well, we had to arrest him and take him in, and they think I'm a traitor because I arrested a Portuguese guy, you know.

Taffy: Looking for a special privilege?

[00:14:57]

Joaquin: You know, the days of law enforcement, letting school teachers off the hook, judges, policemen, everybody, and just giving tickets to the poor farm worker with eight or nine kids, they should be gone. You shouldn't discriminate, and, you should treat everybody the same. It'll never be that way because police work is a judgmental thing and we're just the first judges being the policemen. They have courts that can adjudicate things, too. When a police is prejudiced and is not fair with

everybody, it's just not good for the world, for the United States, or anything. People lose confidence in their government if they have poor police work. Policemen cannot be gods, there is only God that is God. Many police are given jobs that require judgments that can affect someone. I know that there are very few policemen that are Portuguese — most of them are Irish or other nationalities. State government and federal government have been very good in not being prejudiced against a certain nationality or a certain people. Their requirements were made up of criteria that would make you an honest sincere policeman with a strong backbone. I was very fortunate that when I took my test I passed it real good. It was good that I had done good in school, that counts a lot. Most of the Portuguese people who lived out in this area did not go into police or government work because they wanted to follow their parents' trade.

[00:17:22]

Rose: A lot of times when we're with someone driving down the road, we'll say, my goodness, if only your dad or your mother could come back at this particular time, they would not know the area, because, there was nothing but ranches and open land and everything — and now look. It would be hard to find where they actually lived because of the development and everything.

Taffy: Things have changed greatly.

Rose: Oh, yes.

Taffy: Could you maybe describe your happiest visual memory of the area?

Joaquin: Well, for me, winter was a drudgery because everything was muddy and wet and you couldn't do any work. The springtime was about the best time because all these fields were green and beautiful. Tomatoes were growing, beans were growing, barley and all that. This was a very beautiful area with real rich soil. I thought that those were the happiest times. In the fall, you had harvesting and that was a good time. Winter was a drudgery, all the water. You got sick and tired of not being able to work.

Taffy: That's still true now. Winter is still dark around here.

Joaquin: Yes, this was all fields out here. You could go with a tractor and disc them all. Now it's all houses. The only thing I have against it is that they built all the houses in the richest soil, the most flood-prone area. I hate to put blame on it, but it is the planning people who plan all this. There is another thing to take into effect: it is close to the state capitol and close to the city of Sacramento where everything goes on. It's too bad that all this beautiful farmland has been taken over by houses. Actually, there is more green vegetation now than there was before, because of all the trees. Years ago, Sacramento didn't have any trees, hardly; it was like a desert. But now when there's a population in there, you have people planting trees instead of fruit trees. Some of them are fruit trees, but if nothing is being done, and there were no people around, it would revert back to the desert. I think there is more birds here now and there is more of everything.

[00:20:10]

Rose: A lot of the old timers, the other generation of his folks, they came over here and worked the land. They worked hard and probably their kids did. But the new ones come up and it's just like everywhere else out in the Midwest — the children don't want to work on the ranches anymore. They take off to the city. That's where their opportunities are. To be a farmer today is very hard, to make a decent living. I think a lot of these places that have sold off, not particularly by the older people, but the

younger people, they have benefitted by their parents' hard work in selling the land and making a lot of money. So, naturally, the developers want to come in and do something with it.

Joaquin: If Sacramento becomes all houses and commercial and all that, it's just inevitable because of the location. It's too bad that beautiful farm ground is being converted, but that's the way it happens in a civilization. They build the richest area because that's where the people want to be.

Taffy: Are there still fruit trees and fruit orchards up the road, or is it all mostly tomatoes and stuff like that?

Joaquin: There's a few, but eventually they'll be extinct. You make a lot more money by subdividing the land and having houses on it or commercial development. Years and years ago, Hale Brothers owned a lot of property out here in Natomas. The Hergut Ranch, the Mike Zeberi Ranch was owned by Hale Brothers. Interstate 5 and Garden Highway are in that area now. When Sacramento was developing, from 16th Street out, there were farms out there. I know my stepfather had a chance to buy land in that area, rather than in Natomas, but the ground in Natomas was much better for what he wanted. So, instead of buying on 16th and J, Hale Brothers bought properties out here and it just developed that way because the ground wasn't as good I guess. You know where the money goes is where the population goes.

Taffy: Sure.

[00:22:57]

Joaquin: They've made a lot of studies, the reason why there is a place in Las Vegas is because a lot of money went in there. Be it that it was from the mafia or from whoever, the money is there and people can get jobs. They can move there, and you can create a big amount of population. Just like in Natomas, there's a lot of big developers that want to develop. I don't see why they shouldn't be able to. When they buy out the farmers' property the farmers get a lot of money. Developing out here creates a lot of jobs. It creates some rich people and some who live off the rich people, and then they create other attorneys that live off those.

Taffy: That's a great way to look at things. I like that.

Joaquin: Yes. In the long run, you're creating more jobs and creating more, because when something sits doing nothing, it's not good.

Taffy: When everybody was living on these farms, and the tax collector said there was so much space between and so forth, was it quite a big deal to go into Sacramento? Perhaps you worked so hard you didn't have time.

[00:22:45]

Joaquin: We went in maybe on a Saturday, to get supplies and things. We traveled a little bit more than other families because my real dad had a Dodge car. He always liked Dodge cars. That was when I was only eight years old. When I was growing up and going through high school, we hardly ever went, except on Saturday or a Sunday, downtown. Most of our time was taken up by working.

Taffy: Just working and shopping even when you went into town. You didn't go just for entertainment.

Joaquin: Yes. The roads were a lot worse. There was hardly any traffic, but you had to fight muddy roads and washouts and all kinds of things to get to town. The Jibboom Street Bridge was only two lanes wide. At one end my stepfather had an accident. He had the right of way, but another guy ran a stop sign. But, my stepfather admitted he was wrong, when it was the other guy's fault.

Taffy: Why?

Joaquin: He thought the fact that he had been in an accident was terrible, whether it was your fault or not. He didn't do that much damage.

Taffy: How long did it take to get into town from here when it was bad?

Joaquin: We only lived 3 miles from town. We walked it many a time. It would take us about 25 minutes to walk into town. If you went in a car.

Taffy: It must have been a fast walk!

Joaquin: That was a fast walk. We went through the fields, we didn't stay on the roads.

Rose: As the crow flies.

Joaquin: I mean, town is 3rd and J Street. I could probably walk it in 25 minutes right now.

Rose: Do you want to climb fences?

Joaquin: I might have to go through people's backyards. We didn't live very far from the Capitol. In the wintertime was when we had the tough time with the roads.

[00:27:04]

Rose: Did you have flooding? Didn't you have a flood with all the water coming in?

Joaquin: Well, the only place it would flood would be Northgate between the levees.

Taffy: Where it still floods.

Joaquin: Yes. We had the Jibboom Street Bridge where we crossed over. This flooded more than out there. Where I lived, it never did flood. See, we had a canal in the back and they had those pumps going and it would keep the water down. District 1000.

Rose: Still there.

Joaquin: Yes, those big pumps are still there.

Taffy: What haven't I asked you that you want me to know? Can you think of anything else you'd still like to discuss?

Joaquin: One of the things which affects the farmers when you have a war, the demand for food is really great. It was hard getting gasoline, there was rationing. There was a lot of, what do you call that, black

market gasoline, and a lot of other — you couldn't get equipment, but if you knew the right people you could get equipment. There's always a little bit of a clash between the farm people and the downtown people. Even though a lot of people didn't realize it, the downtown people treated the farm people unfairly, many, many, many times. You had to overlook it, just keep your nose to the grindstone and you would survive. They make laws downtown that they want the people in the farms to obey. It's not fair, but that's the way the cookie crumbles, I guess.

[00:29:40]

Rose: Didn't you say you remembered when they planted all those trees on Rio Linda Boulevard coming up from there? The ones that are still there along the road?

Joaquin: That was about 1941 or 1940.

Rose: You would say, when you were a kid you used to walk along and get berries along the road.

Joaquin: That was a long time ago.

Rose: That is what she wants to know about, a long time ago.

Joaquin: It wasn't in Natomas, it was on Rio Linda Boulevard.

Rose: Oh, Ok.

Joaquin: I can remember a field trip that our teacher took us to, Mrs. Thomas. She was very much against the Natomas Company, for I don't know what reason. The Natomas Company was on the stock market at that time, but they also used to mine gold in Folsom. She pointed out, she said, "See all these fields, all this rock at the surface? This rock makes this ground never be worth anything, ever, ever, and ever. It's destroyed by the Natomas Company just for trying to get gold out of it. The environmental impact is terrific. There's no trees, now all you have is rock piles." She didn't live this long, but if she were to go out there now, she would see that there's all kinds of houses on those rock piles; there's roads, freeways. Unfortunately, she didn't get to see all that, but it would have proven her wrong. Although, she was a very educated woman, she couldn't see them being able to use that land for anything again, ever. It was proved, even if you got rocks, you can make something out of it.

Taffy: There's a use for it.

Joaquin: If you have lemons, you make lemonade.

Taffy: That's great.

[00:31:50]

Joaquin: The thing that's really something is many of the people who used to be here sixty years ago, fifty-five years ago, have died and they've left their property to their children or to the State of California. I can remember a lot of the old timers worked hard, they made a living, and then they died. Generation after generation, and they will continue doing that, but not here anymore. It will be city dwelling instead of rural. I know many farmers that sold out and moved to Nevada, to Fernly, Nevada, and grew their alfalfa. Some were Portuguese and some were other nationalities. They developed

property and grew alfalfa in Fernly, Nevada. They would come to visit and see how we were all doing. It's just one generation after another doing what they have to do to survive.

Taffy: It's a good experience, and a good life.

Joaquin: Yes. My immediate family, we had seven kids in my immediate family altogether. A lot of the Portuguese families only had two or three. My stepfather wanted a lot of children to work on the farm. So, that's why they had so many children.

Taffy: Makes good sense to me. Sounds like a plan.

Rose: I think they did that a long time ago. If you look back and see how many children in a family, six and eight children. Even the toddlers all had their responsibilities. Today it's a lot different.

Taffy: Can you imagine 7-year-olds cleaning out all the dairy equipment today!

[00:34:00]

Joaquin: A lot of the laborers we had came from Mexico and they would work on the farm. They came at a certain time each year. I don't know if they had green cards. I don't think they did. We had one man in particular that I'll never forget. He is in jail still. His name was Juan Corona. He used to get Mexican — he had a labor camp and he was a very hard-working man. He was making a lot of money. Then on July 4, 1964, one of his farm labor trucks, he had his brother driving, they left Sacramento to go to the labor camp, it ran off the road, and killed seven farm workers and injured twenty five. I was the one that investigated it. The attorneys got hold of all the injured people and started suing him. He could see that he was going to lose his entire fortune because of this one accident. He became mentally deranged and killed a whole bunch of people and buried them out in the peach orchard because he had a hatred for those migrant farm workers who caused him all that grief.

Taffy: Oh, for heaven's sakes, sad story.

Joaquin: He's still in jail in Vacaville. He was a very hard worker and very honest until that incident happened and changed his life.

Taffy: It changed his life.

Joaquin: It changed his life to where he was very bitter and hated farm workers. They were the ones that helped make him be successful and he was very successful. He could see that he was going to be very successful and it all came to an end. Then I know of one particular guy who was very good in school. He had a bunch of harvesters and had a farm labor camp. His name was Ray Freitas. He's dead now. Anyway, he was one of the more successful guys, because he worked for other people on a contract deal. One time, at his farm labor camp, they had an old car that had been shortened. They used it to rake hay and pull implements around. One of the workers went downtown, to 3rd and J streets, to get drunk, hit a pedestrian, and killed him. He got sued for everything he had. It made him an alcoholic. He died in Woodland. There's a lot of downfalls.

Taffy: It's a tough life.

[00:37:40]

Joaquin: Yes. For instance, Donalda's dad, he was a go-getter, real nice guy. I worked for him, since I didn't have a father, who was a father to me, after I was nine years old. I got a lot of ideas from him. He got injured from working on a haystack. He fell off, and it paralyzed him, but see, he was real successful and a real nice man and — boom, everything came to a halt. That's what you have to watch out for on the farm, not getting injuries. The person who learns a lot is the one who keeps his mouth shut, asks questions, and picks someone else's mind. That's how you learn things — other people's ideas.

Taffy: You have to stay interested.

Joaquin: Yes, yes.

Taffy: It's wonderful meeting interesting people with interesting stories. I'm sure you must be tired. We have been going for quite a while. I hate to wrap it up because there's so many exciting things. I really want to thank you so much for your time, and for the interview, both of you.

Rose: You're welcome.

Joaquin: Thank you. It sure gave me a lot of pleasure getting all this off of my chest.

Taffy: I may suggest that they come back to interview you again if you feel up to it or want to. You certainly have a lot of rich stories to tell.

Rose: I've enjoyed it. There's going to be a lot of people on this I guess, isn't there.

Taffy: Yes. I've enjoyed this morning.

Joaquin: Right now they're in Clarksburg. You want to spend all your money and go have Portuguese food.

Taffy: I do.